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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Dissemination of information on decolonization during the period from April 2009 to March 2010

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in paragraph 2 of its resolution 64/105, considered it important to continue and expand its efforts to ensure the widest possible dissemination of information on decolonization, with particular emphasis on the options of self-determination available for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and, to that end, requested the Department of Public Information to empower the United Nations information centres in the relevant regions to disseminate materials to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In paragraphs 4 and 5 of that resolution, the Assembly requested the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to update web-based information on the assistance programmes available to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, and requested the Department and the Department of Political Affairs, to continue their efforts to take measures through all available media, including publications, radio and television, as well as the Internet, to give publicity to the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. The present report, prepared in response to that mandate, covers the period from April 2009 to March 2010.

2. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information covered decolonization issues extensively through: press releases in both print and online formats; news stories in the official languages in all areas of its news output on the United Nations website; radio; and various publications. Coverage focused on the work of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

3. The Department, working closely with the Department of Political Affairs, deployed a press officer from Headquarters to cover the Caribbean regional seminar

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on the implementation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism: challenges and opportunities in the process of decolonization in today's world, organized by the Special Committee, in Saint Kitts and Nevis from 12 to 14 May 2009.

II. Coverage of issues before the General Assembly

4. The Department issued a total of 48 press releases on decolonization, in English and French, during the reporting period, covering meetings, statements and hearings of various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Four press releases were issued on the above-mentioned Caribbean regional seminar held in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

5. The topic of decolonization, including the roles of the Trusteeship Council and the Special Committee, was regularly included in the narrative of the guided tours of United Nations Headquarters provided by the Department. The maps and text on decolonization, both of which were updated and reprinted in 2009 to make them more attractive and easier to read, assisted the guides in explaining to the visitors the historical process of decolonization, as well as the locations of the current Non-Self-Governing Territories. The set of maps on decolonization was moved to the General Assembly building owing to the change of the tour route associated with the capital master plan.

6. The Department's Public Inquiries Unit continued to respond to queries from the public concerning decolonization. The Group Programmes Unit facilitated a briefing, on 11 February 2010, for a group of 19 students from the United States Virgin Islands, on the work of the United Nations, including the role the Organization played in the decolonization process and how decolonization, in turn, impacted its work.

7. To support media coverage of the Organization's work on decolonization, the Department's Media Documents Centre assisted in disseminating press releases to the media, while the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit provided accreditation and liaison services.

III. United Nations Television and Radio

8. Coverage of issues and activities related to decolonization, including meetings of intergovernmental bodies and the work of United Nations envoys, remained an integral part of the programming produced by the Department's television and radio operations. Among a range of events, United Nations Television covered deliberations of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the General Assembly's consideration of the report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee. United Nations Television covered critical events related to decolonization and disseminated materials by means of its live pool coverage and daily news highlights packages sent to news syndicates.

Events covered included Security Council action on the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in May 2009; and the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina on the Falklands Islands (Malvinas) to the Special Committee on 18 June 2009. In addition, decolonization issues were featured in the "UN in Action" television series and highlighted in a report distributed by UNifeed.

9. Throughout the period under review, efforts to advance the decolonization process were also the subject of a series of programmes produced by United Nations Radio. United Nations Radio covered meetings of the Special Committee dealing with the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Gibraltar, Puerto Rico and Western Sahara through regular news programming, interviews and features.

IV. Internet

10. The Internet is one of the most useful and effective means of transmitting information on decolonization to end-users, including those who reside in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Department continues to discuss ways to enhance the decolonization website with the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs.

11. Throughout the reporting period, issues and developments related to decolonization were covered regularly on the United Nations News Centre portal, one of the most heavily visited areas on the United Nations website. Articles produced by the associated United Nations News Service, featuring United Nations decolonization activities, were distributed as e-mail news alerts, in English and French, to thousands of subscribers around the world. Among them was a story covering the Secretary-General's message to the above-mentioned Caribbean regional seminar held in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

V. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library

12. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library responds to queries on decolonization and related issues on an ongoing basis.

VI. United Nations Photo, Audio and Video Libraries

13. The Photo Library developed an Excel database related to decolonization, cross-referenced with relevant meetings and events, as well as supporting documents. The database was created as part of the Department's collection maintenance, development and inventory pilot project. The project aims to ensure organized and easy access to the Department's rich archival collection of photographs in major subject areas, including the decolonization process and history of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

14. The database at present is used as an internal photo library reference and research tool for identifying historic photo coverage on decolonization, including United Nations activities at Headquarters and in the field (Trusteeship Council, trust territories). In the future, during the final phase of the United Nations photo digitization project, the database will serve as a tool for creating metadata (indexing,

cataloguing, authority fields) for digital photo records, before posting on the Web. This will help publicize the Organization's work on decolonization in a visual format, and this collection will be available online.

15. The Audio Library processed, indexed, catalogued, and published on the Web approximately 30 audio files on decolonization including audio recordings from the Fourth Committee and the Special Committee meetings in June, October and November 2009.

VII. Publications

16. The Department is currently working on the complete 2007 collection of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, to be published in December 2010. The *Yearbook* will provide comprehensive coverage to the work of various United Nations bodies, including the General Assembly, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It also includes general decolonization issues and the situation of individual Non-Self-Governing Territories.

VIII. United Nations information centres and services

17. During the reporting period, the United Nations Information Service in Geneva issued press releases by human rights experts on the issue of decolonization and produced summaries of meetings where the subject was discussed, in particular in the context of country reviews undertaken by the human rights treaty bodies and during meetings of the Human Rights Council. The topic of decolonization was also addressed during the service's biweekly news briefing. Decolonization and the role of the Trusteeship Council were included in the Service's guided tour of the Palais des Nations, as well as in the information programmes organized by the Service for visiting groups. Approximately 100,000 visitors took the guided tour in 2009.